1963 tape reveals threat to JFK

By EARL GOLZ

An anti-Castro Cuban vowed about two months before President John F. Kennedy was assassinated that he and others "are going to give him the works when he gets in Dallas" Nov. 22, 1963, according to a tape recording made available by a retired Dallas police intelligence officer.

The recording, made secretly at a John Birch Society meeting in Farmers Branch, is of the voice of Ernesto Castellanos, who, at the time, said he had lived about 3½ years in Dallas and had flown in a plane during the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961.

Several weeks ago, investigators for the House Assassinations Committee obtained the recording from the retired officer, who never had released it publicly.

CASTELLANOS WOULD have learned of the Kennedy visit to Dallas from newspaper reports only about five days before the Oct. 1, 1963, meeting at which he spoke. Sponsors of the meeting were identified on the recording only as two Farmers Branch couples named Stewart and Merrill.

"The United States at this moment, if you keep Kennedy there, we are going to be in a bad way," Castellanos said. "Get him out, get him out. The quicker, the sooner, the better. He's doing all kinds of deals . . . Mr. Kennedy is kissing Mr. Khrushchev (Nikita Khrushchev, then premier of the Soviet Union). I wouldn't be surprised if he has kissed Castro, too."

Castellanos' name was not listed in the Dallas telephone book or city directory in the early 1960s, including 1963.

THE WARREN Commission, in its extensive investigation of possible Cuban connections with the assasination, never mentioned Castellanos or his other two Cuban-speaking exile companions at the meeting in its 26 volumes or other documents publicly released.

The FBI interviewed dozens of persons who knew about meetings of anti-Castro groups in the Dallas area during the months before the assassination, including several reportedly attended by accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald.

A report by the Dallas County Sheriff's Department, dated one day after the assassination, stated Oswald had been to an Oak Cliff home of a Cuban where "Freedom for Cuba Party" members met for several months.

The house, later identified as the one at 3126 Harlandale St. and occupied by Jorge Salazar in 1963, was the same house where Antonio Veciana, founder of the Alpha 66 anti-Castro group based in Miami, Fla., met in April 1963, according to a 1964 FBI report released in 1971.

A drawing of an intelligence agent who worked with Veciana in attempts to assassinate Castro and known only as "Maurice Bishop" was distributed publicly by the House Assassinations Committee July 30 to try to learn his real identity.

CASTELLANOS WAS a guest speaker at the Farmers Branch meeting, with two other Cuban exiles introduced as Ed Hughes and Francisco Leyba. Both indicated they lived in Dallas. Hughes, born in Chicago, said he had lived in Cuba most of his life and had been superintendent of the Havana power and light company for 24 years before Castro took over. Leyba said he had been a farmer in a remote Cuban province. He said he had been imprisoned by Castro forces and escaped.

Castellanos said he had been "trying to put a Cuban parade in Dallas and the chief of police won't let me. And we are going to do it.

"And we are waiting for Kennedy the 22nd of November. We are going to see him, in one way or the other. We are going to give him the works when he gets in Dallas.

"Mr. Good Old Kennedy, I wouldn't even call him President Kennedy. He stinks. I don't want to get mad."

Castellanos was bitter about the last-minute withdrawal of support by the United States during the Bay of Pigs Cuban invasion. He said he was in one of seven planes that left Miami. He said shortly before they flew over the Bay of Pigs "in a beautiful American voice I head, 'Turn back, the whole thing is off.'

"It was all ordered by the CIA," he said. "I got another word for the CIA but I wouldn't say it here."

AFTER SPECULATING that some of his listeners at the meeting may have voted for Kennedy in 1960, Castellanos said, "I bet you it is also true that they are sorry about it. They will be sorry for the rest of their lives."

Stating he was supporting any presidential ambitions by U.S. Sen. Barry Goldwater, R-Ariz., in 1964, Castellanos said Goldwater is "Mr. Nobody at this moment. We have to get rid of one (president) first. We have to wait and see what Mr. Goldwater is going to do afterward.

"That's the same thing Kennedy said all over the United States before he took the presidency. He said he was going to do this, going to do that. Look what he's doing; he's sinking the United States. I'm sorry to talk about this. But the way I feel about the man, it's for your own good."